



### **Somaliland Update – President Bihi’s Historic Visit to the U.S. / April 2022**

Dear friends,

Last month, the President of the Republic of Somaliland, H.E. Muse Bihi Abdi, and a high-level government delegation met with senior officials in the Biden Administration and Congress.

The below newsletter provides an overview of the delegation’s unprecedented series of consultations, during which U.S. and Somaliland officials agreed to deepen cooperation and partnership on key shared objectives, including maritime security, counterterrorism, humanitarian assistance, environmental protection and business promotion.

Just one week after the President’s delegation concluded their visit, a devastating fire ravaged the main market in our capital city of Hargeisa, injuring dozens of people and destroying hundreds of business.

We are grateful to our friends in the U.S. and around the world who have expressed their solidarity with Somaliland in the wake of this tragedy. Ongoing support from the U.S. and other international partners is especially critical in times like these.

The Mission looks forward to working with our partners in the U.S. to advance democracy, fight terrorism and create prosperity in the Horn of Africa.

Warm regards,

Bashir Goth, Somaliland Representative to the United States





## KICKING OFF A HISTORIC VISIT



### *The Great Promise of Closer U.S.-Somaliland Ties: An Address by H.E. Muse Bihi Abdi*

President Bihi kicked off his visit with a keynote address at The Heritage Foundation on March 14. Laying out a framework for U.S.-Somaliland relations, he said, “As an equal with other nations, Somaliland will be able to contribute even more effectively to a sustainable and prosperous future for the Horn of Africa, building on our own experience in forging an oasis of stability in a long-troubled region.”

Heritage Foundation President Kevin Roberts endorsed U.S. recognition of Somaliland in his opening remarks, stating, “America should proudly be the first state to recognize Somaliland as an independent state.” In an interview with the [Heritage Explains](#) podcast following his address, President Bihi highlighted the potential of the U.S. and Somaliland working together toward a more prosperous future. [Watch the President’s speech here](#)

## U.S. LAWMAKERS PUSH FOR CLOSER RELATIONS WITH SOMALILAND



*Representatives McCaul, Smith lead bipartisan letter on increased engagement with Somaliland*

As President Bihi arrived in Washington, House Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member Michael McCaul (R-Texas); Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights Subcommittee Ranking Member Chris Smith (R-New Jersey); and a bipartisan group of lawmakers sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken calling on the State Department to increase engagement with Somaliland, noting that: “Somaliland’s geo-strategic location on the Gulf of Aden, consistent support for democracy, cooperation on countering terrorism, piracy, and other security threats in the region, relations with Taiwan, and growing economic potential warrants that the United States explore additional opportunities to partner with Somaliland.” [Read more](#)



House Foreign Affairs GOP  
@HouseForeignGOP

LR @RepMcCaul: “Too much is at stake in the geo-strategic Horn of Africa to shut the door on deepening ties with #Somaliland. I was proud to lead a bipartisan letter to @SecBlinken to do more with Hargeisa, including diplomatic, economic and security engagements.”



Robert C. O'Brien  
@robertcobrien

Great letter. I fully endorse. A bipartisan foreign policy success opportunity for the Biden Admin. “Action this day” to show we can take the initiative worldwide even in the midst of the crisis in Europe. #Somaliland @RepMcCaul





### *Senators introduce “Somaliland Partnership Act”*

On March 17, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Jim Risch (R-Idaho), along with Senators Chris Van Hollen (D-Maryland) and Mike Rounds (R-South Dakota), Chairman and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health Policy introduced the bipartisan “[Somaliland Partnership Act](#).” Led by a policy statement that “a strong relationship between the United States and Somaliland would provide numerous, mutually-beneficial, strategic opportunities,” the Somaliland Partnership Act would require the Secretary of State to evaluate on an annual basis: U.S. assistance provided to Somaliland; consular services



provided to Somaliland residents, and; security assessments related to the Travel Advisory for U.S. citizens seeking to visit and do business in Somaliland.

The legislation also requires the Departments of State and Defense to study the feasibility of establishing a security partnership between the U.S. and Somaliland, including opportunities for U.S. training of Somaliland's security sector, and the establishment of an "American Institute of Somaliland" in Hargeisa that would enable direct engagement between Somaliland and the U.S. government, a similar diplomatic arrangement to that between the U.S. and Taiwan. [Read more](#)



**Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member**   
**@SenateForeign**

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The US is a strong and enduring partner of [#Somalia](#), but this should not mean limiting our support to other democracy and security partners in the country and wider region. That is why [@ChrisVanHollen](#), [@SenatorRounds](#) & I intro'd this bill on [#Somaliland](#).

### *Rep. Scott Perry introduces "Republic of Somaliland Independence Act"*

On March 18, Rep. Scott Perry (R-Pennsylvania) introduced H.R. 7170 to recognize Somaliland as a separate, independent country. The legislation would authorize the President of the United States to recognize Somaliland and encourages the U.S. government to reject all territorial claims by the Federal Republic of Somalia over Somaliland. [Read more](#)

## **WASHINGTON WELCOMES PRESIDENT BIHI**

### *President Bihi concludes positive meetings with Administration, agrees to establishment of working groups*

President Bihi met with a number of U.S. officials during his visit to Washington, including Dana Banks, Deputy Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Africa; Molly Phee, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs; Ilan Goldenberg, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs; Ambassador Andrew Young, Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Engagement, U.S. Africa Command; and Maura Barry,



Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for Africa at the U.S. Agency for International Development. As a result of these consultations, the U.S. and Somaliland agreed on the merits of working groups to advance mutual coordination and cooperation.



## *A warm, bipartisan reception for Somaliland on Capitol Hill and beyond*

On Capitol Hill, the Somaliland delegation met with Senators Chris Van Hollen (D-Maryland) and Mike Rounds (R-South Dakota), Chairman and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health Policy; Reps. Gregory Meeks (D-New York) and Michael McCaul (R-Texas), Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee; House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith (D-Washington); Reps. Karen Bass (D-California) and Chris Smith (R-New Jersey), Chairwoman and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights; and Reps. Steve Chabot (R-Ohio), Young Kim (R-California), Tim Burchett (R-Tennessee), Brian Mast (R-Florida), Ilhan Omar (D-Minnesota) and Scott Perry (R-Pennsylvania).

The delegation, which included cabinet ministers and prominent business leaders, also held consultations with the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, as well as with the World Bank, International Finance Corporation, Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, and U.S. Chamber of Commerce.



House Foreign Affairs GOP  
@HouseForeignGOP

LR @RepMcCaul: "It was an honor to meet with President @musebihi and members of the Somaliland Delegation today. With recent events in the Horn of Africa, it's critical that the U.S. continues to deepen ties and engagement with Somaliland."



House Foreign Affairs Committee  
@HouseForeign

CM @RepGregoryMeeks: Our meeting with President Bihi of Somaliland this morning allowed us to discuss ways to deepen engagement, promote cooperation and further support their remarkable progress in democracy, governance and security.



Young Kim  
@RepYoungKim

Honored to meet with President Abdi of Somaliland today to discuss how the U.S. can enhance our engagement with Somaliland and the Horn of Africa on trade, security and stability.





### *Think tanks and academic institutions host discussions with President Bihi*

President Bihi spoke to students, faculty and staff at George Washington University's Institute for African Studies at an event hosted in partnership with the Onero Institute on Somaliland's progress toward international recognition. The President emphasized Somaliland's readiness to be a valued and capable partner of the United States in areas of mutual interest, with a particular emphasis on security cooperation. He also participated in roundtable discussions at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), where he discussed cooperative efforts to



bolster Somaliland's democratic institutions and civil society, and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), where he highlighted Somaliland's contributions to maritime security in the Red Sea region. [Watch here](#)

*Rep. Chris Smith (R-New Jersey) calls on international community to remove obstacles preventing COVID-19 vaccine distribution in Somaliland*

Following the delegation's visit, Ranking Member Rep. Chris Smith (R-New Jersey) discussed the obstacles that have prevented Somaliland from acquiring adequate COVID-19 vaccines from the international community at a March 31 House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights hearing. Rep. Smith highlighted Somaliland's unrecognized status and the state of relations between Somaliland and Somalia, concluding: "To build Africa's long-term resilience in the face of COVID-19, we should work with governments in mitigating obstacles to vaccine distribution, including the approval process, scaling complex manufacturing and most importantly resolving transportation challenges." [Watch the hearing here](#)

**SOMALILAND PARTNERS OFFER SUPPORT IN WAKE OF TRAGIC FIRE**



*Devastating fire destroys main market in Hargeisa, with losses estimated up to \$2 billion*



On the evening of April 1, a massive fire broke out in the main market of Somaliland's capital, Hargeisa, injuring more than two dozen people and destroying hundreds of businesses. An estimated cost of over \$2 billion was lost, according to [The Star](#). Speaking to reporters, Hargeisa Mayor Abdikarim Ahmed Mooge said, "The town has never witnessed such a massive calamity. This place was the economic center of Hargeisa and even though the firefighters did their best to contain the fire, the market is destroyed." Jamal Aideed, Chairman of the Hargeisa Chamber of Commerce, said the market accounted for 40% to 50% of the city's economy. Friends of Somaliland from around the world, including UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson and U.S. Ambassador in Mogadishu Larry André, Jr., quickly reached out to Somaliland officials and took to social media to demonstrate solidarity during this difficult time. [Watch here](#)



**Boris Johnson**   
@BorisJohnson

United Kingdom government official

Saddened to see the aftermath of the fire in Hargeisa with such destruction in the open market that is the economic heart of the city, affecting many small and family enterprises.

Your city will rise again and the UK will do what we can to support Somaliland's rebuilding effort.



**House Foreign Affairs GOP**   
@HouseForeignGOP

LR @RepMcCaul: "Saddened to see the destruction caused by the [#HargeisaMarketFire](#). The people of [#Somaliland](#) are resilient and will rebuild after this devastation. The U.S. should work with our partners in Hargeisa to assess how we can help."



**House Foreign Affairs Committee**   
@HouseForeign

CM @RepGregoryMeeks: Concerned by reports of a fire destroying Hargeisa's main market and hope those injured recover quickly. I support US and international efforts to partner with Somaliland's leaders to rebuild as soon as possible.



**Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member**   
@SenateForeign

The [#HargeisaMarketFire](#) is a tragic loss. While I'm grateful that no lives were lost or serious injuries reported, I know it was an important source of livelihood for so many. The U.S. stands with the people of [#Somaliland](#) in rebuilding.



**U.S. Embassy Mogadishu, Somalia**   
@US2SOMALIA

Ambassador André spoke with [#Somaliland](#) President @musebiihi about the devastating [#HargeisaMarketFire](#). We are relieved no one was seriously hurt. We are confident the Somaliland people and their leaders will achieve a full recovery.

## IN THE NEWS

# AXIOS

*Axios: Somaliland's president takes recognition pitch to D.C.*



In an interview with Axios, President Bihi reiterated Somaliland's commitment to independence: "Every country we meet for the past 30 years, they have the same answer for us," Bihi said, recounting praise for Somaliland's stability and improvements in its institutions, but reluctance to be the first country to recognize its independence. 'Someday, we will find the first country,' he said." Rep. Michael McCaul (R-Texas), ranking member on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, told Axios it was "urgent" that the U.S. increase its engagement with Somaliland, starting with a diplomatic presence in Hargeisa and direct development aid to the government. [Read more](#)



### *Foreign Policy: Somaliland Courts U.S. for Independence Recognition*

A March 21 piece from Foreign Policy explored the delegation's U.S. visit, highlighting their arguments for Somaliland's stable governance and geostrategic location as assets for U.S. interests in the Horn of Africa. Speaking with the outlet, Foreign Minister Kayd said, "Even if it takes 100 years for recognition, we will still stand for our identity, we'll still engage with everybody, and we'll still dream of a day where Somaliland is recognized as its own country." [Read more](#)



### *The World: Somaliland's president makes case for independence*

Speaking with The World's Africa correspondent, Halima Gikandi, for a broadcast interview, President Bihi made the case for international recognition of Somaliland, saying: "My primary objective in my visit to Washington or to any capital in the world is to explain [to] the



government and the people of the country we are visiting, [...] that Somaliland has the right legally and morally, politically to be recognized. [...] We need the recognition to interact with all the countries in the world.” [Listen here](#)

# CLIMATEWIRE

## *Climatewire: How warming affects the breakaway African region of Somaliland*

Environment Minister Shukri Haji Ismail discussed the challenges of responding to “back-to-back droughts coupled with a powerful cyclone that threatens to worsen a locust infestation” as an unrecognized country with Climatewire, saying, “It is not only for one country to really struggle with climate change. Everything is possible when we are together and when we are fighting the same way. [...] Every year so much devastation is happening, from east to west, from south to north, and still we are far behind of what we were supposed to do.” [Read more](#)



Office of the Somaliland Representative in the United States

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